

Statement by parents and Communities United for Education (PCUE)

Hello Dear Board members, commissioner, Lucille Davy, visitors and guests,

Thank you very much for the opportunity that I have been given to speak here today. My name is LueElla McFadden. I am a great-grant parent of a child who goes to school # 38 in Jersey City. She is in second grade. I am also the President of Parents and Communities United for Education (PCUE). PCUE is the Jersey City chapter of Statewide Education Organizing Committee (SEOC).

I am here to speak to you on behalf of our parents, our children and the communities where our children live and go to school to.

As parents we strongly believe that we have a right to be heard and included in any discussion that has to do with our children's education and their future. **The secondary school reform as it is today has been put together with no input from parents and organizations that represent them.** This plan does not reflect our hopes. It does not address our concerns and issues, and the problem that our children and we together with them have to deal with on daily basis. Great achievements for our children and our public school can only be realized through building partnership between parents and public school officials. **There is no other way.**

Here are some facts that I would like you to consider when you make your decisions.

Four out of six Jersey City High schools in need of improvement or if you'd like to use another word, our schools are failing our children. **The drop out for JC high school is 8%, four times the state average.** In JC only 62% of students graduate high schools by passing HSPA. This is 20% less than the state average. This is even worse if you look, for example, at Lincoln High School in Jersey City. At this school, only 29% of student graduate with HSPA. Majority of the student who decide to go to college are not prepared. They end up taking remedial curses that have no credits. Sometimes, many of them spend their grants and financial aid before they can take any college courses. This preparation must be done in high schools not in the colleges. I can talk of more depressing numbers.

But I think this would get my points across that our children are not being prepared as it is.

What can make us believe that they will meet higher standards, take rigorous courses, and pass high stake tests? We do need them to get an excellent education. No one more than us want our children to do better. We applaud your efforts to challenge our children to perform better and achieve excellence. But we need to walk the walk and it means we have to make sure that we have the resources to get there.

We need the necessary facilities and smaller class size.

We need teachers who have the academic and professional training and on going support to teach our children and build working relationship with parents?

Do we have enough Guidance Counselors?

Are there enough Crisis Intervention Teachers?

Do we have academic and social service supplemental programs we need in our schools?

In Jersey City, we have one Social Service Coordinator for every 6,000 students. These are hard working people, but how can they possibly handle such an immense number of students?

If we do not provide the means with which we can empower our children to perform better, then we are setting them up to **fail and you will need to build more prisons that is now costing the state about \$35,000 annually per inmate.** We will be setting up our public schools to fail and we cannot have that and we will not have that.

So please keep in mind that without us your plan will go nowhere. We need you to listen to us carefully.

Thank you very much for time you have given me to speak.